

Dr. Campbell Looks At TV Addiction

(Third of four parts)

This week's interview with Dr. Dan Campbell deals with "TV Addiction." To be addicted to something means that you need it, either physically or psychologically.

Dr. Sidney Simon describes a "profile of addictions" when he points out that:

- 1) Many addicted people will say "I like it" rather than "I need it";
- 2) You can tell if you are addicted by seeing how you cope with yourself when you go without it for a day, a week or a month;
- 3) Addiction is a system of "crutches" so that you don't have to actually feel or be involved in something, and;
- 4) Addiction is an inadequate coping mechanism for stress (numbing yourself). Dr. Simon further states that the danger of addiction is that "nothing changes, and stress persists."

Franks: Dr. Campbell, prior to taking courses and workshops with Dr. Simon, I must admit that I watched TV, or the "tube", for hours and hours at a time. I didn't realize what a hold it had on me until I tried to get away from it. I didn't realize the effects it had on me and other people like me. (Have you ever tried to carry on a conversation while competing with TV?) Now, I watch very little TV, and I feel free and thankful for my lesson. It seems like I have more time to do things I've always wanted to do, such as write, read and work toward lifetime goals. Can you expand on this?

Campbell: The television, and the amount of time both children and adults are parked in front of their TV's, is one of my "soap-box" topics. I fear that more people are harmfully addicted to the "idiot box" than to alcohol or tobacco. Now, I know that there are good things to watch on television and many programs are "educational", and so on. But in my opinion, the overall effect of TV addiction is so detrimental that it does more harm than good to the lion's share of viewers. It hurts on many facets: mental, emotional, moral, but most of all in our fantasy life.

Looking Up

By Tom Franks



Franks: How can it hurt us in all those areas?

Campbell: If you watch someone (or yourself) watch TV, the level of activity is less, usually, than when the TV is off. In fact, for some people the only activity they seem to get is running to the refrigerator to get junk food during the commercials. TV shuts down our social life and interactions even within our own families. I saw a comic strip the other day in which a family watched an evening of TV, the father sent his children to bed, then turned to his wife and proudly said, "I thought we had forgotten to communicate."

He, and many other parents, feel that being in the same room with children is the same as spending time with children. On TV, the thinking is done for you. The visual and auditory input limit the amount of thinking we do. And with the addition of

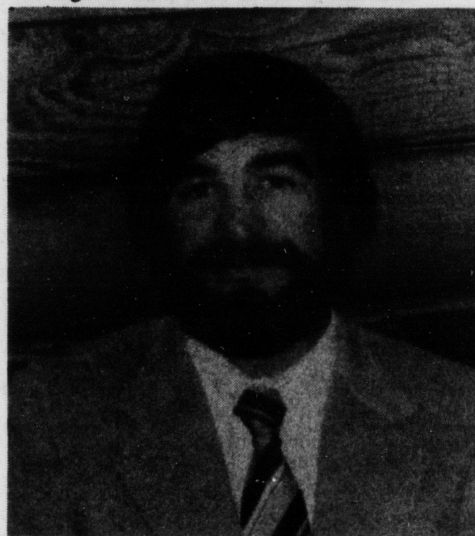
"canned laughter" telling us what is supposed to be funny (when we are supposed to be amused), the feeling is being done for us. But the worst aspect, for me, is that now you get a feeling of "being there" without going. How can we get excited about working extra hours with the promise of taking the family to Myrtle Beach, when every week Jack Lord takes us to Hawaii and Tattoo greets us at Fantasy Island? Our dreams are expanded so far, in many cases, that the possibility of satisfaction for less spoils the sense of achievement. In this manner, for many, it becomes silly to put forth extra effort to get something that won't even be treated as special by the family. This is where a lot of apathy we see in many people may come from. A set of polls in college campuses has found that many of the young women today feel depressed because they feel they are in competition with the beauties on TV.

Finally, the amount of moral depravity that we can only hope will not have permanent effects on some of our youngsters is becoming alarming. Psychological theory says that we tend to become like what we are around most. I have heard of several court cases which concluded that the watching of television could not have such a bad effect on children to change their attitude and lead them into crime. And yet I find it "highly coincidental" that \$250,000 per minute was spent on advertising during the Dallas episode in which J.R. was shot. A quarter of a million dollars bet that an advertiser could influence our minds enough so we would buy their products. And yet we are supposed to conclude that the other 50 minutes per hour don't influence our minds??

Franks: Suppose someone wanted to "kick the habit" of TV addiction? How can they do it?

Campbell: Well, I suppose they could do as drastic a thing as I did. Shortly after I found myself watching a Lucy rerun I had already seen, I realized how badly I was addicted and gave away my set. Probably a more reasonable means would be to sit down and find out how much TV you actually watch (the national average is staggering—five hours per day). Then, come up with alternative activities that members of the family could do if the "tube" weren't on. Finally, decide in advance which shows are worth watching. Then, the hardest part of all, sticky by your guns.

Just as a smoker quits, it often helps him if he does other activities, get the family started in a variety of projects. If there is "nothing at all" to do, this is a good indication that you were strongly addicted, and that your creative mind needs exercise. Don't give up! It is amazing how much you will be able to do with all that extra time whether it be playing outside as a family, building a puzzle, reading, or actually having a conversation. And you will begin to have a lot of fun. Good luck!



DR. DAN CAMPBELL



GARY STEWART

Hello, Is This The Cab Place

One of the most useful—but most aggravating—devices ever invented is the telephone.

Sometimes I think mine is more aggravating than good.

My home telephone number, with two of the last three numbers transposed, is the same as Harris-Teeter's. I get about three calls a week intended for them.

My number must also be almost identical to a local cab company, because I often get calls wanting me to come to a certain street number. I never will forget one call I received a couple of years ago from a drunk, who summoned me to a certain place. When I told him this was not a cab company, he cursed me out.

I'm forever getting calls at all hours of the night about newspaper-related items, and those I don't mind if it is news occurring at that moment. For instance, many times I am awakened because of a serious fire or wreck around town, and I'm grateful for my friends who alert me to those happenings.

But, then, there are also those callers who call to complain about something that was or was not in the paper, or to inquire about advertising or some other item that could wait until the office opens the next morning.

And, we're always getting calls about unusual pets, trees and flowers that would make interesting pictures.

But the most aggravating calls are the ones you get when the person on the other line hangs up as soon as you answer. If they've realized they have reached a wrong number, it seems they could at least say "I'm sorry."

On the other hand, I get aggravated at the way I'm sometimes treated when I am the caller instead of the receiver.

It ticks me something fierce to ring a phone number, and before ever getting a chance to tell the person on the receiving end who I would like to speak to, I am told "hold on please."

One of the toughest things in life is to get a phone call through to a politician during a controversial situation.

Hello, may I speak with the Honorable Mr. Politician?

Secretary: May I ask who's calling?

Yes, this is the local newspaper.

Secretary: Hold on a minute and let me see if he's in. I heard him say he was going somewhere.

(Two-minute pause).

Secretary: I'm sorry, he must have stepped out. (If he had, the secretary would have known it, because the only way out of the building is by her desk). May I have your number and have him call you back?

Yes, it's 739-7496.

Secretary: I'll have him call.

Of course, he never does.

But, then again, when the situation is reversed, and the reason for the call is to bring honor to the Honorable:

Hello, this is...

Secretary: Yes, he's in and will be right with you.

The Great Betrayal

To the editor:

Throughout history Americans have always had the ingenuity to meet and conquer a crisis. This is proving to be true with the energy crunch. Government at all levels, City, County, State and Federal, have in recent years asked the American public to driveless, buy more fuel efficient automobiles and build and manage homes, offices, industrial and public buildings more efficiently. This has been done to conserve energy, reduce inflation and rectify our balance of payment. In other words, to get us from under the economic gun of the Opec Countries. With new leadership in Washington, our Federal Government is embarked on a campaign to lower government expenditure and taxes. I think it would be safe to say this is the sentiment in all other states except North Carolina. Both Democrats and Republicans have joined hands in the U.S. Congress in trying to reduce government waste and spending so the tax burden may be lifted from the backs of the working people in America.

When requests for energy conservation was made to the people of North Carolina, they naturally expected a reward, but instead Governor Jim Hunt is trying to penalize thrift and conservation by imposing a higher gasoline tax on all North Carolinians under the guise of better roads. I think this can properly be labeled "The Great Betrayal of the People of North Carolina."

I have some pertinent suggestions.

- (1) Place the maintenance and building of

highways under the general tax fund. Since we have had a surplus in recent years in the general fund, there is no reason to tell the people of North Carolina that funds are not available for good roads.

(2) Take a hard look at the 50,000 additional state jobs that are reported to have been added to the state payroll during the first Hunt administration and see if they are affordable and necessary to keep this state moving.

(3) Appoint an efficiency study commission in government and let us ascertain as to what the people of North Carolina need and can afford from state government and do away with expenditures for political expediency. Through such a study commission, waste and corruption could be rooted out of state government giving North Carolina dollar value for every tax dollar paid.

As a life long registered Democrat, I say it is time for conservative Democrats and Republicans to join arm in arm and prevent the increase of taxes in North Carolina. If the sentiments prevail, which have been coming from Raleigh in recent months, I think we North Carolinians might just have a New York City, Cleveland or Boston to look forward to.

I hope all legislators will adopt the economic sentiment of the rest of the Nation and refute tax increases and demand more frugality in state government.

Cecil F. Brownk. Asheboro, N.C.

Little Knowledge A Dangerous Thing

No truer words were ever uttered than "A Little Knowledge Can Be A Dangerous Thing". Just try, if you haven't already, investing in some big, fat, high-priced medical books.

Nothing would do me but I had to have not one, but several. I can't keep my hands off of them. Knowing full well better, I dig them out every time I or anybody else, suggests a new symptom or disease!

I can't stop there either, I keep reading on and on, until I begin to think I'm so sick I'd better call an ambulance to rush me to the hospital quick, there's not a minute to be spared. I don't see how one person could be living and breathing and feeling pretty good and have so much wrong with them. Boy, I'm in bad shape and didn't even know it.

Those books will do you in and that's for certain. Why do I keep reading them when I know the results? Beats me, it's a fascination with trying to outsmart myself, I guess. I know all the time if I'm in pain, or suspect all is not just right, or if it's just time for my regular appointment, I'm going to a doctor who has medical degrees framed and hanging all over his office.

I want to see him take my blood pressure, feel my pulse, and give me the once over and then tell me with his own mouth words you may want to hear or not hear, as the case may be. Then you can act accordingly if you've got a grain of sense.

The words spoken which cause the most pain I suspect are that you'd better give up some bad habit you've indulged yourself in for years. Sure you knew better, but when your doctor looks you straight in the eye and tells you what you're doing to yourself and the dire consequences then you start shaking in your boots and think about it seriously — if nothing else.

Nothing sounds better than "I'll see you in six months or a year." There's hopes for you that long anyway. Whew!

Isn't it strange when you mention some operation or disease you or someone you know faces or has had you thought must be very rare, it turns out everybody in creation either has had the same thing or knows someone who has. Maybe even lots of folks, so your tale of disaster takes on an entirely new outlook. Nothing so great about your mysterious ailment, it's going around.

Man probably never feels less exalted, his ego more deflated, his body more pitiful, than when he sits all alone huddled under a sheet in an empty doctor's examining room waiting and waiting for what seems like hours, although it may be only a few minutes. You say your prayers and promise yourself all kinds of probably almost impossible things you're going to do to take better care of yourself — if just given one more reprieve.

The verdict could be compared to a jury who hold your whole life in their hands. When they come in with that little slip of paper marked guilty or not guilty.

It's almost worse than reading those big, fat, expensive medical books and seeing in black and white that you're liable to have any number of things — Lord knows you are a ready candidate and sure looks like you're marked guilty.



Every time I pour over those books at length, I declare I'll hide them for good this time or have my own private book burning session. Knowing full well I'm going to remember where they are and investigate and fumigate as the need comes up.

You want to rent them for a small fee and get scared out of your wits? The mystery of the human body far surpasses any Agatha Christie novel you ever read.

I don't advise trying to diagnose your own case. You may find you are learning more about the human body than you really need or want to know. Besides your own doctor might not appreciate you coming to him for help and acting like you know it all, which of course you can't and don't.

You'd better leave the entire situation to the man who has all those diplomas framed and hanging all over his office. Long years of study and practice went into getting each one of them.

Those books were written by experts for experts, not for the likes of you or me. I'll have to admit I've picked up just enough information to make "A Little Knowledge A Dangerous Thing!"

Just to show you how valuable these books really are, recently I had a blood test. Beats me how a few drops of blood can tell how you're getting along. Mine came back O.K. all except Triglyceride was too high. I rushed to my books and there wasn't even any mention of such a thing. Had me plum worried.

I figured it must have something to do with one slunking Trigonometry in school or it could be because I've been feeling a mite "trigger-happy" of late with just cause.

I cornered my doctor at a church picnic. Guess what, it was caused by eating too many jelly beans since Reagan became President! "Books For Sale" — Cheap.

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